

6.2v 1/6
ANTENUPTIAL
FORNICATION
CONSIDERED.

IN
A LETTER
TO A
YOUNG GENTLEMAN.

Duriora sunt praelia castitatis. CYPRIAN.

L O N D O N:

Printed for T. BECKET and P. A. DE HONDT,
near Surry-Street in the Strand.

MDCCCLXVI.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL
FORMATION
CONSIDERED.

IN
ALL THE



JOHN
YOUNG

Printed by J. G. & J. H. Smith, Stationers, Strand.

LONDON:

Printed by J. G. & J. H. Smith, Stationers, Strand.

Printed by J. G. & J. H. Smith, Stationers, Strand.

Printed by J. G. & J. H. Smith, Stationers, Strand.

ANTENUPTIAL FORNICATION

CONSIDERED.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS charmed with the specimen you gave me, in our last interview, of your zeal to promote the interest of virtue, even in the face of a powerful opposition. You will perceive that I am referring to what you then told me of the conversation which happened in a circle of your friends on the unpleasing subject of antenuptial fornication. Believe me, Sir, I was not a little in pain for you, to find that in such a number of ingenious persons, and most, if not all of them

B

your

your seniors, you had not one to second you :
 and especially, as the question itself so much
 surprized you, that, according to your own mo-
 dest confession, you could neither argue upon
 it with conviction to the company, nor with
 satisfaction to your own mind. I really
 thought your situation was, in its degree, an
 instance of virtue in distress. I immediately
 suggested a few obvious considerations on the
 subject, with which you was candid enough
 to express yourself well-satisfied. But our
 interview was too transient to admit of a
 thorough examination; and therefore you
 will pardon me for repeating, and enlarging
 upon such sentiments, as may in some measure
 prove instructive, but cannot afford any pro-
 portionable entertainment.

As some of your friends are persons of
 learning, I don't wonder, Sir, that they ap-
 pealed to ethical writers in support of their
 own incautious assertions, and particularly to
 the

the definition which such writers usually give us of marriage, as merely consisting in *a mutual engagement between the parties*. With this specious regard to moral truth, and boasted authority of the most venerable names, it was very natural for your friends to grow confident in the imaginary goodness of their cause, while they were really giving to virtue itself a mortal wound.

It must be allowed that the point in dispute is not a little affected by the manner in which marriage is defined. And if we follow the writers, now referred to, through their well-digested systems, we shall easily discern that they do not leave the present question in such a very unfavourable situation, as your friends would represent. Those writers carefully observe, that any contract, and particularly that of marriage, may subsist between persons who are, either in *a state of nature*, or in *a community*. By the latter, they mean,

a company of free men, which is so associated, that the whole body, either by themselves, or representatives, shall judge concerning any disputed rights or properties of each member of it. And by the former, such men who are not entered into community by any mutual engagement to each other. Consequently, if they are persons in a state of nature, who are contracting marriage with each other, their mutual engagement has no concern with a community, and may remain private between themselves. On the other hand, if they are persons in a community, their engagement needs the support, and is subject to the regulations of the community to which they belong. And since we have in reality no other persons to speak of in the present question, but such who are in community, the strictest ethical propriety obliges us to say, that marriage is a covenant between a man and woman, transacted at such time, and in such manner, as the laws of their country direct,

direct, in which they mutually promise to cohabit for life, and to be continually careful to promote the happiness of each other, and their posterity, and to entitle such posterity to the common privileges of society. To confirm your approbation of this, be pleased, Sir, to compare it with the following extracts from what has more lately been written on the subject.

Bishop Warburton, in his *Sermon on Marriage*, observes, "It has both a natural and
 " a social efficacy. Considered in a natural
 " light, as an union of male and female,
 " from whence all the charities of human
 " life arise, it is a religious contract. Con-
 " sidered in a social light, as creating new
 " relations and connections, all of which
 " have their distinct rights and privileges
 " assigned them in civil life, it partakes of a
 " civil contract. This distinction is marked
 " out to us by the nature of things, and

“ confirmed by laws divine and human.

“ What then, it may be asked, are the distinct

“ parts which God and the magistrate claim,

“ as their peculiar in this solemn contract ?

“ It is from God that two are made one by

“ an indissoluble tie, and this is the law of

“ religion. It is from the magistrate that

“ this union, ordained by heaven, is executed

“ by a solemn form, prescribed by the state,

“ and this is the law of society. From all

“ this it necessarily follows, that till this

“ sacred union, instituted by God in paradise,

“ be sealed and confirmed by such rites and

“ ceremonies, as the wisdom and polity of

“ civil states direct to be observed, God

“ hath not joined any pair together, accord-

“ ing to his holy ordinance, and that the

“ observance of such rites and ceremonies

“ is essential to that union which he declares

“ to be indissoluble. To suppose that this

“ union may be authentically made, in the

“ present state of religion and society, with-

“ out

" ont the intervention of the civil magistrate,
 " leads either to fanaticism or licentiousness.
 " From these principles, and this certain de-
 " duction, we collect the justice of religion,
 " as well as the expedience and true policy
 " of a late salutary law, solely calculated for
 " the support and ornament of society, by
 " which the just rights and authority of
 " parents are vindicated, the peace and har-
 " mony of families preserved, the irregular
 " appetites of youth restrained, and the
 " worst and basest kind of seduction encoun-
 " tered and defeated. I mean that sage pro-
 " vision, whereby all pretended marriages,
 " not solemnized as the wisdom of our an-
 " cient constitution directs, are rendered null
 " and void."

" Every member of a civil society," says
 Dr. *Rutherford*, in his *Institutes of Natural*
Law, " is obliged, by the civil compact, to
 " obey all the laws of it, at what time soever

“ those laws are made. And as to matri-
 “ mony, when a marriage is solemnized,
 “ otherwise than the law requires, the par-
 “ ties are not bound to each other as
 “ husband and wife. The bargain which
 “ they have made in words is no bargain
 “ at all, and produces no obligation. As
 “ they are not therefore husband and wife,
 “ our natural or religious notion of marriage
 “ is out of the question ; for as there is no
 “ contract at all, there cannot be any per-
 “ petual contract ; as they are not joined
 “ together at all, they cannot be joined to-
 “ gether by God ; and consequently we have
 “ no grounds to conclude, that they cannot
 “ be put asunder by man.”

In a pamphlet, intituled, *Remarks on*
Dr. Stebbing's Dissertation on the Power of
States, &c. the author says, “ Two very
 “ important but directly opposite pretensions
 “ at once present themselves, the claim of
 “ a pa-

“ a parent to a discretionary negative autho-
 “ rity, and that of a child to absolute liberty.
 “ In a state of nature, neither of these is
 “ without foundation. Ordinarily the pre-
 “ sumption is in favour of the parent. The
 “ parent’s concern for the honour of his
 “ family is no more to be imputed to pride
 “ or avarice, than a beggar’s pretension to
 “ an heiress to natural and disinterested love,
 “ On the other hand, children have no less
 “ reason to expect that some fixed bounds
 “ should be set to this indefinite authority.
 “ In what manner then may civil society,
 “ supposing it to act on the truest principles
 “ of liberty, proceed with regard to these
 “ general and opposite pretensions? May it
 “ not fairly do, as it does in other like cases?
 “ May it not settle by some general rule,
 “ and in such a manner as seems to it most
 “ conducive to the public good, these in-
 “ determinate and seemingly inconsistent
 “ claims? May it not fix a precise time, in
 “ which

" which each of them shall entirely give
 " place to the other? May it not absolutely
 " fix this precise time, by refusing to autho-
 " rize any act contrary to this its determi-
 " nation? And provided that in this instance,
 " it restrains the power of contracting in
 " children no longer than it does in all other
 " cases, where fraud and notorious indiscre-
 " tion are in like manner to be guarded
 " against, can it justly be censured as ex-
 " ceeding, or even abusing, its authority?"

To these extracts I shall only add the ety-
 mological remark of *Michaelis*, president of
 the Royal Society of *Gottingen*, in his *Dis-*
sertation on the Influence of Language on Opi-
nions, and of Opinions on Language. [See
 the Annual Register for 1764, page 208.]

" Another great advantage," he observes,
 " which is to be deduced from etymological
 " precision, is, that it serves to preserve the
 " original notions of things which time hath
 " diver-

“ diversified. Thus the definitions usually
 “ given of marriage are imperfect, in that
 “ they do not convey a precise distinction
 “ between the state of matrimony and con-
 “ cubinage. But if we consult the Greek,
 “ we shall find the word νόμος used indiscrimi-
 “ nately for *marriage* and *the law*; and
 “ hence we may discover, that to be married
 “ to any one, originally signified to be united
 “ according to law.” How far this remark
 “ applicable to the apostle’s use of νόμος,
 Rom. vii. 1, 2. I leave those to consider,
 who are more conversant in Biblical know-
 ledge.

If a *mutual promise*, without its *legal au-*
thenticity, was allowed to be the whole im-
 port of the marriage-covenant, what cala-
 mities would soon spread through society, as
 the immediate consequences of encouraging
 perfidious men to make use of the most so-
 lemn, but secret, promises and engagements,
 merely

merely to gratify their vilest inclinations? We daily see with what precaution men think it necessary to act in affairs of far less importance. If it is but transferring into another's possession such inferior property as money, merchandize, or land, what care is there to have the previous contract duly testified according to law? But how incomparably and inestimably precious is that property, which consists in personal honour and virtue; since the loss of it can never be compensated by any thing that earth can afford? Whenever this noblest property is to be transferred to another's possession by marriage, who but the most imprudent and infatuated would risk their all on a contract without law, and therefore contrary to law? And if by such imprudence and infatuation the jewel of personal honour and virtue be lost, how often does that involve in it the loss of every other blessing which naturally results from lawful marriage? For instead of the most
endearing

endearing and delightful friendship for life,
 what rage of jealousy, what bitterness of
 mutual contention, and a thousand violent
 passions conspire to break the heart? How is
 the best relief often denied under the many
 infirmities peculiar to a state of pregnancy?
 How are children left destitute of the most
 desirable provision for their maintenance, in-
 struction, and government? How is the regu-
 lar descent of patrimonies overthrown?
 And to the unspeakable prejudice of the com-
 mon interest of mankind, how is the rational
 hope of a numerous and healthful offspring
 totally precluded?

Even the heathen nations appear to have
 been so fully convinced of the propriety and
 force of this reasoning, that they universally
 made marriage a public transaction, and reck-
 oned it infamous to have no public marriage-
 rites and ceremonies. Though many among
 them made light of fornication, and though

some

some of them allowed it, yet it was only when supposed to be committed, either with slaves, or with common prostitutes †. We never read in Pagan writers of such a licence wherein women of reputation or fortune were concerned, but much said to condemn it. Among the *Romans*, if a man had kept a woman a considerable time, nevertheless he could not take her to wife, without the consent of her friends; which plainly supposes that they considered a public contract as necessary to marriage. In this sense we must understand *Quintilian*, when he says, “Familiarity and commerce, without public rites, can never make a wife *.” For the same reason *Plato* in his *Republic* advises, that the first care of

† Dum tete abstineas nuptâ, viduâ, Virgine,

Juventute & pueris liberis, ama quod lubet. *Plautus.*

* Dixi uxorem esse cujus cum viro matrimonium factum est. Quid amplius? Nam sicut coitus atque congressus citra jus non efficeret uxorem, ita uxor etiam citra hæc manet. *Quintil. Declam.*

a legi-

a legislator should be to make some nuptial laws, as what would have a good influence in all future regulations of the state †.

I presume, Sir, from what has been said, you have the satisfaction to see how the light of nature illustrates and establishes the necessity of a legal authenticity, as an essential part of the marriage-covenant. You are very desirous, I know, to have this point tried also by the dictates of revelation. Nor am I unwilling to gratify you, as far as I am able; since the Bible lies open to every man, and the best interests of youth cannot but be peculiarly dear to every one who has the heart of a parent.

† Αθ. Φερε δὴ πρὸς Θεῶν, τιν' ἀρα πρῶτον νομον δεῖτ' αὐτὸ νομοθέτης, ἀρ' οὐ κατὰ φύσιν τὴν περὶ γενεσεως ἀρχὴν πρῶτην πόλεων περὶ, καὶ ἀκοσμήσει τὰς τάξεις; Κλ. Τί μὴν; Αθ. Ἀρχὴ δ' ἐστὶ τῶν γενεσῶν παταῖς πόλεσιν, ἀρ' οὐχ ἡ τῶν γαμῶν συμμιξίς καὶ κοινωνία; Κλ. Πῶς γὰρ οὐ; Αθ. Γαμικαὶ δὲ νομοὶ πρῶτοι κινδυνεύουσι τιθεμένοι, καλῶς αὖ τιθεσθαι πρὸς ὀρθότητά πᾶσι πόλεσι.

Amongst

Amongst the passages of Scripture that relate to marriage, some are *preceptive*, and others *historical*. Of the former are such as these. ‘ To avoid fornication, let every man
 ‘ have his own wife, and let every woman
 ‘ have her own husband. Let not the wife
 ‘ depart from her husband, and let not the
 ‘ husband put away his wife. The wife is
 ‘ bound by the law as long as her husband
 ‘ liveth.’ [1 Cor. vii. 2, 9, 10, 39.] ‘ Mar-
 ‘ riage is honourable in all, and the bed
 ‘ undefiled.’ [Heb. xiii. 4.] ‘ Did not the
 ‘ Lord make one? Yet had he the residue of
 ‘ the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he
 ‘ might seek a godly seed. Therefore take
 ‘ heed to your Spirit, and let none deal treach-
 ‘ erously against the wife of his youth.’
 ‘ [Mal. ii. 15.] ‘ Have ye not read,’ says
 ‘ our Lord to the *Pharisees* concerning divorce,
 ‘ that he which made them at the beginning,
 ‘ made them male and female? and said, For
 ‘ this cause shall a man leave father and mo-

' ther, and shall cleave to his wife, and they
 ' twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they
 ' are no more twain, but one flesh. What
 ' therefore God hath joined together, let
 ' not man put asunder. They say unto him,
 ' Why did *Moses* then command to give a
 ' writing of divorcement, and to put her
 ' away? He saith unto them, *Moses*, because
 ' of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you
 ' to put away your wives; but from the
 ' beginning it was not so. And I say unto
 ' you, Whosoever shall put away his wife,
 ' except it be for fornication, and shall
 ' marry another, committeth adultery; and
 ' who so marrieth her which is put away,
 ' doth commit adultery.' [*Matt.* xix. 4—9.]

By these divine *precepts* we are plainly taught,
 that the marriage-relation is to endure for
 life; that it is honourable in persons of every
 rank and station in society; that it ought to
 begin and proceed with prudent advice and
 upright intentions; and that it is designed

by the blessed God to answer the most valuable purposes for the general happiness of mankind, and more particularly to prevent fornication. But while it is allowed that the above passages of Scripture directly prove nothing more than the importance and excellence of marriage, and the necessity of preserving it inviolable; yet they evidently admit of this as a just and natural deduction from them, that marriage is such a relation as ought not to commence without a due notoriety of the fact. For as it is appointed more immediately to prevent fornication, it ought therefore to be so transacted, that it may, as far as is possible, prevent all suspicion of fornication; which it cannot do, unless the marriage-covenant be transacted in public. As it is honourable in all, the declaration of it before proper witnesses must be one necessary expedient towards securing that honour. If it is so important to take heed to our spirit, in order to preserve it inviolate after its commencement,

mencement, it must be proportionably important to take heed to ourselves, that the manner of its commencement be justifiable both before God and men. If it is a comparative forsaking of father and mother, this must at least intimate, that the transition from their peculiar friendship to that of a wife, is a thing publicly known in society. And if the law of *Moses* required a divorce to be attested by writings, it necessarily supposes the previous marriage to have first received some public attestation.

Scripture-history, while it leads us through a series of events for more than four thousand years, may reasonably be expected to contain some evident traces of the manner in which the marriage-covenant has been publicly testified, and to make this appear to have been a practice common to very remote ages, and even to nations whose laws and customs were in many respects widely different from

each other. Wherever such traces occur, it can be no impropriety to take them according to the order of time in which they are placed in the sacred volume. We may even begin with the marriage of our first parents in paradise, however strange and chimerical, it may seem, at the first view, to consider that as an instance of the marriage-covenant being transacted in the presence of witnesses. *Adam and Eve*, at the time of their marriage, were in the strictest sense in *a state of nature*, as opposed to *a community*, and therefore there was not the same reason for witnesses then, as there was afterward. But while this is undeniable, it makes it the more worthy of our remark, that their marriage should be solemnized with such manifest reference to the concern which community was perpetually to have in it, and in such a manner as bespeaks it to have been a public, rather than a private transaction. When an inspired prophet tells us, 'The Lord hath been witness

'ness

• nefs between a man and the wife of his
 • youth, her that is his companion, and the
 • wife of his covenant;’ [*Mal. ii. 14.*] he
 must undoubtedly mean no more than an
 invisible Witness. But it seems reasonable to
 conclude concerning the marriage of our first
 parents, that their Creator was pleased to be
 more than invisibly present. We cannot read
 over the many instances in which *Jehovah*
 rendered himself visible in his converse with
 mortals, as with *Abraham, Jacob, Moses, &c.*
 without inferring from thence, that it is more
 than probable He would especially converse
 with man, while in his state of innocence
 and immortality, by some resplendent and
 majestic symbol of his presence. And indeed
 the account of the marriage of *Adam* and
Eve, as well as other transactions in paradise,
 strongly imply such a visible appearance of
 the Divine Being. ‘The Lord God,’ says
 the sacred historian, ‘caused a deep sleep to
 fall upon *Adam*, and he slept, and he took

‘ one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh
 ‘ instead thereof. And the rib, which the
 ‘ Lord God had taken from man, made he
 ‘ a woman, and brought her unto the man.
 ‘ And *Adam* said, This is now bone of my
 ‘ bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be
 ‘ called woman, because she was taken out
 ‘ of man. Therefore shall a man leave his
 ‘ father and his mother, and shall cleave unto
 ‘ his wife, and they shall be one flesh.’ [*Gen.*
 ii. 21—24.] But in the account our blessed
 Lord gives us of the same transaction, he
 expressly says, that the nature of the mar-
 riage-covenant was explained to *Adam* and
Eve by ‘ Him that made them.’ [*Matt.* xix.
 4—6.] These seemingly different accounts
 of *Moses* and Christ, when duly compared
 with each other, convince us, that *Adam*
 could not have spoke concerning the obliga-
 tion of a child to a parent, before ever that
 relation existed, if he had not received it by
 some extraordinary revelation; to which also
 he

he must have been intirely indebted for the knowledge of what passed in his sleep; and therefore what he said concerning the marriage-covenant, he had first received from the mouth of God. On the whole, we have sufficient authority to conclude, that, on this great occasion, there was some visible appearance of the blessed God to our first parents, who as their Creator and Father united them together in marriage, explained to them with an audible voice the nature of that relation, pointed them to himself as an immediate and visible Witness between them; a Witness, who had an equal and indisputable right and property in them both; a Witness, who must in every view be more than a thousand other witnesses; and who, by all these concurring circumstances, gave a pattern of what should be the manner, as well as the matter, of the marriage-covenant through all the successive generations and communities of mankind.

The first opportunity we have of tracing any conformity to this divine pattern, is the marriage of *Isaac* and *Rebekah*. After *Abraham*'s pious and prudent servant had well acquitted himself of his important errand in getting a wife for *Isaac*, and had obtained a satisfactory answer from *Bethuel* the father of *Rebekah*; and from *Laban* her brother; we are then told, that, in order to her leaving her father's house, as the intended wife of *Isaac*, she was asked in the presence, both of *Abraham*'s servant, and of all her immediate relatives, 'Wilt thou go with this man?' And in their presence she declared, 'I will go.' [*Gen.* xxiv. 57, 58.] And considering that this was a fact which happened more than two thousand years after the marriage of our first parents, that it was transacted in a Pagan country, and by persons who at that instant were most of them idolaters, [*Joshua* xxiv. 2, 15.] their practice therefore in this affair may be no less esteemed a real conformity

mity to the light of nature, and the laws of their respective communities, than to the original divine appointment. If it be objected, that the absence of *Isaac* made this cautious procedure, in obtaining the explicit consent of *Rebekah* before so many witnesses, absolutely necessary; it is easy to answer, that *Isaac* and his father *Abraham* were sufficiently personated by *Eliezer*, and had in fact given him the most ample instructions and powers to negotiate this affair in their name and stead. And though the history makes no mention of any formal agreement afterward made between *Rebekah* and *Isaac* himself; yet there is all imaginable reason to conclude, that the customs and laws of *Canaan* relating to marriage would not be less regarded by *Abraham* and *Isaac*, than those of *Mesopotamia* had been by *Bethuel* and *Laban*. We may be the more persuaded of this, because, in another instance which happened not long after, there was the same precaution

precaution made use of, though both the parties were actually present.

The instance now referred to, is the marriage of *Jacob* to *Rachel* the daughter of *Laban*, which was transacted in the same idolatrous country and family from whence *Rebekah* came. And it is very observable, that though *Jacob* was for seven years one of *Laban*'s domestics, and was through all that interval considered by the whole family as the intended husband of *Rachel*, yet their matrimonial converse was not suffered to commence, till those rites and ceremonies had been previously attended to, from whence we have abundant evidence that their marriage was a public transaction, and had all the notoriety that could be requisite to any fact in which a community was interested. We are expressly told, that, according to his agreement with *Laban*, ‘*Jacob* served seven years for ‘*Rachel*,’ after which he said unto *Laban*,
‘ Give

‘ Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled,
 ‘ that I may go in unto her. And *Laban*
 ‘ gathered together all the men of the place,
 ‘ and made a feast.’ [*Gen.* xxix. 18—22.]

It is certain, by what follows in the history, that the marriage ought to have been consummated in the evening of the same day of festivity, and was no otherwise prevented, than by *Laban*’s treacherously substituting *Leah* instead of *Rachel*. This was unparalleled treachery, and not at all extenuated by the apology which *Laban* made for it, when he pretended it was the custom of his country not to give the younger in marriage before the first-born. But for a man of his odious character and conduct, to provide such authentic witnesses of his daughter’s marriage, is a striking evidence, that some public manner of transacting the marriage-covenant was a thing universally agreed upon amongst men, and established by the laws of every community, and supported by the united dictates
 of

of reason and revelation. That these were *Laban's* views and sentiments in this affair, may be farther illustrated by the following circumstance. When *Jacob* had left him without his knowledge, and *Laban* had pursued after *Jacob* seven days journey, and just when they were taking their final leave of each other, *Laban* made this remarkable appeal to God, because, as he intimates, he had no man to appeal to as a visible witness, between them, ‘ If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters; no man is with us; see, God is witness between me and thee.’ [Gen. xxxi. 50.] It seems very unnatural to object to what has been said concerning *Jacob's* marriage, that he could have had no pretence for matrimonial converse with his intended wife, till after the seven years were expired, which was the condition of his enjoying her. ’Tis true he could not have had any justifiable pretence. Nevertheless his

his punctually delaying to enjoy his beloved *Rachel* for the full term of seven years, not only illustrates his external conformity to the laws of the community, and to the dictates of reason and revelation; but also this, that it was the fixed determination of his heart, to avoid all such opportunities for antenuptial fornication, as in that space of time must naturally be supposed to have often presented themselves. Nor does this kind of supposition suggest any thing more than is meet in favour of *Jacob's* moral character, or in disparagement of *Rachel's*; especially if it be considered, how very defective her principles and practices afterward appeared to be, when she first stole, and then persisted in treacherously concealing her father's images; and likewise how she threatened her husband with her own death, if he did not give her children; so far was she from a becoming sense of dependence upon God, and humble acknowledgment

ledgment of him. [*Gen.* xxx. 1. xxxi. 19, 34, 35.]

The next thing which deserves our notice in the sacred history, is the unhappy affair of *Dinah*. Her father *Jacob* was now removing, by divine direction, with his numerous family and large possessions of flocks and herds, from the country and house of *Laban* his father-in-law, to his own father *Isaac* in *Canaan*. In one of the stages of this tedious journey, he took up his quarters for some time in the neighbourhood of *Shechem*. During his stay there, his daughter *Dinah* entertained herself with a visit to such ladies of that country, as were suitable to her youth and rank in life. This ill-judged visit gave a young prince, whose name was *Shechem*, an opportunity of seeing her, and of contracting too intimate a friendship with her. Notwithstanding *Dinah* was the daughter of *Jacob*, and therefore had shared in the distinguishing

guishing advantages of a religious education under a parent of such eminent piety; yet the gaiety and inexperience of her youth, being then about her fifteenth year, in concurrence with her very unguarded situation, rendered her at once a powerful though undesigning tempter, and an easy prey to temptation. It is too plain concerning *Shechem*, that, being now in the heat of youth, and wantonness of authority, and destitute of those principles of education, or influences of example, which might have checked the impetuosity of his lewd inclinations, he only considered his will as his law, and the present gratification of sensual appetite as his highest felicity, without any regard to future consequences, either as to himself, or others. We are therefore expressly told, that
 ‘ when he saw her, he took her, and lay with
 ‘ her, and defiled her.’ [*Gen. xxxiv. 2.*] Indeed it is afterward observed in his favour, that
 ‘ he was more honourable than all the house
 ‘ of

' of his father.' [Ver. 19.] And it appears,
 to his real honour, that he did every thing
 in his power to make both *Dinah* and her
 family some compensation for the injury.
 This heathen prince was very far from treat-
 ing her, as *Amnon*, a prince of *Israel*, odiously
 treated, even his sister *Tamar*, in ' hating
 ' her exceedingly, after he had forced her,
 ' so that the hatred wherewith *Amnon* hated
 ' *Tamar*, was greater than the love where-
 ' with he had loved her.' [2 Sam. xiii. 14,
 15.] On the contrary, ' *Shichem's* soul clave
 ' unto *Dinah*, the daughter of *Jacob*, and he
 ' loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto
 ' the damsel.' [Gen. xxxiv. 3.] Or, as it
 is in the margin, ' he spake to her heart,'
 which was no doubt greatly oppressed with
 painful reflections on the scandalous and
 guilty circumstances into which her impru-
 dent visit had brought her. It was also
 highly for *Shechem's* honour, that he very
 sincerely set on foot a treaty of marriage be-
 tween

tween himself and *Dinah*. And in order to render the negotiation successful, he exerted all his influence as a ruler, in subservience to his ardent inclinations as a lover, that he might remove out of the way every thing in the circumstances of his own subjects, which had any tendency to disgust *Jacob*, or his family. Nor have we the least reason to doubt of *Jacob's* design to have the marriage accomplished, if the detestable hypocrisy and cruelty of some of his own family had not prevented it. On the whole, here is an instance in which antenuptial commerce, where the parties plainly intended, as far as was in their power, to remove their disgrace by a speedy and honourable marriage, is stiled by the sacred historian defilement. Here is *Jacob* receiving the tidings of that defilement with sadness and silence, as more oppressive to his spirits than all his former afflictions. Here are the sons of *Jacob* treating it also as the object of their grief and abhorrence, ' be-
D ' cause,'

‘ cause,’ say they, ‘ he has wrought folly in
 ‘ *Israel*, in lying with *Jacob*’s daughter,
 ‘ which thing ought not to be done. Should
 ‘ he deal with our sister, as with an harlot?’

[*Gen.* xxxiv. 7, 31.] And here is the sovereign prince of a Pagan common-wealth, earnestly soliciting to have a marriage concluded between his son and heir, and the daughter of *Jacob*; and this too, after he had been informed of their criminal converse, and thereby making it manifest, that, how different soever his religious apprehensions or civil customs were from those of *Jacob* and his family, he had nevertheless the very same idea of marriage, as consisting in a public, and not merely in a private contract. If it be said, that *Hamor* and *Shechem* were only solicitous to have the daughter with her father’s consent; this is but suggesting a desirable hint in favour of parental authority, at the same time that it necessarily supposes the parents on both sides to be some of the
 best

best witnesses to the marriage-covenant. If it be farther said, that when *Jacob's* sons pleaded, 'Should he deal with our sister, as with an harlot?' It was only their way of unjustly aggravating the supposed crime of *Shechem*, as an apology to their father for their own treacherous and cruel behaviour towards the *Shechemites*; to this it may be replied, that though the brethren's plea did by no means vindicate themselves from far more aggravated crimes; yet it shewed, that they really thought *Shechem* had committed the sin of fornication with their sister. Perhaps it may also be objected, that these enraged brethren, before the execution of their treachery and cruelty, only called this antenuptial fornication by the softer name of 'folly in *Israel*,' the better to conceal their real design. But this is easily answered by observing, that though in our ears it may seem a diminutive expression; yet it appears never to have been used for any crime less

than fornication, and in several instances far more aggravated crimes, as adultery, incest, and sodomy. [*Deut.* xxii. 21. *Judg.* xix. 22. —24. xx. 6, 10. 2 *Sam.* xiii. 12.] Upon the whole, we must conclude, from every circumstance in this story, whether relating to *Shechem's* act of violence, or to the subsequent steps that were taken in order to accomplish a marriage, that every known community of men have considered marriage, in our idea of it, as a public contract.

Thus far we have been taking notice of such instances in the sacred history, as happened long before the giving of the law by *Moses*. And under the law there are at least two particular appointments which deserve our attention, though they are not properly historical. The first of these supposes, that ‘if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed,’ that is, one who is absolutely free from any present engagements to future marriage,

riage, ' and lie with her, he shall surely en-
 ' dow her to be his wife: If her father ut-
 ' terly refuse to give her unto him, he shall
 ' pay money according to the dowry of vir-
 ' gins.' [*Exod.* xxii. 16, 17.] This sup-
 position represents it as neither improbable,
 nor unusual, for a man to try every unjust
 and perfidious method, and no doubt by
 secret and solemn promises of future mar-
 riage, in order to debauch an innocent wo-
 man. The woman is supposed to be at
 length drawn into the accursed snare, and to
 give her consent to that which proves the
 irreparable loss of her honour and virtue.
 Whatever might afterward be pleaded, either
 in defence of the woman for trusting to secret
 promises, which unexpectedly deceived her;
 or in defence of both of them, for having
 sincerely, but secretly, entered into mutual
 engagements; nevertheless this divine law is
 so far from considering any of their pretended
 secret promises as containing the essence of

marriage, that it even impowers the father of the woman, either to put his negative upon their supposed inclination to marry, besides obliging the man who had defiled his daughter to pay him a fine equal to the dowry of a virgin ; or otherwise, if the father had no objection to the man for his son-in-law, he could, in that case, both oblige him to marry, and to endow his daughter.

The other appointment of the law of *Moses*, is that which makes it unlawful for an *Israelite* to ‘ marry a beautiful woman, ‘ though he had taken her captive in war, ‘ and though his love to her was ever so vehement ; unless he had first brought her ‘ home to his house, where she was required ‘ to shave her head, and pare her nails ;’ or, as in the margin, ‘ suffer her nails to grow, ‘ and put off the raiment of her captivity, ‘ and remain in his house, and bewail her ‘ father and her mother a full month ; and
after

‘ after that he might go in unto her, and be
 ‘ her husband, and she be his wife.’ [*Deut.*
xxi. 10—13.] Such a marriage as this would
 from first to last be a public transaction, as
 it is utterly improbable that a female cap-
 tive, of distinguished beauty, should become
 the private property of any particular soldier,
 without the previous direction and determi-
 nation of that martial law, by which the
 prey was publicly to be divided. [*Numb.*
xxx. 25—47. 1 Sam. xxx. 24, 25.] And
 it is equally improbable, that he should be
 able to conduct her to his own house, and
 there keep her a full month, in the punctual
 observance of certain rules, which would so re-
 markably change the appearance of her person,
 and all this without the knowledge of his
 neighbours. Indeed the honour of marriage
 was eminently consulted by this divine law,
 as the delay of a month, the stripping off of
 every natural and artificial ornament, with
 the addition of sorrow and distress for having

lost all former friends and comforts, are circumstances that would naturally tend to correct the sudden impressions of love, arising from the first sight of any beautiful stranger, and would consequently render the choice of such a wife more mature, and the affection for her more permanent. But, without such wise and salutary precautions, there is too much reason to fear, that the right of conquest in war would too often have been thought a sufficient foundation for an unlimited power over helpless female captives. It may perhaps be observed, that this law proves more than we would have it, because it allows a man to put away such a wife, only on condition of 'letting her go whither she will, but not selling her at all for money, nor making merchandize of her.' [Deut. xxi. 14.] In answer to this, let it be remembered, that the *Mosaic* permission of divorce upon slight foundations was not peculiar to this particular law, nor to the case

case of marrying a captive or slave, and that all kinds of divorce, except that for fornication, are expressly condemned by Christ, as inconsistent with the original institution of marriage. On the contrary, so far as this particular law illustrates and confirms our idea of the marriage-covenant, as a public transaction, it perfectly coincides with the laws of nature, and with the established laws of all other communities.

Besides the above appointments of the divine law by *Moses*, we have also two remarkable instances of the marriage of persons, whose conduct in that affair was professedly conformable to that law. The first was the marriage of *Boaz* with *Ruth* the *Moabite*s. The public manner of it is thus represented. ‘*Boaz* went up to the gate’ of his city, the place where courts of public judicature were wont to be held. Like a person of distinction and figure, as he really was,

was, ' he sat him down there,' and assembled together in the same place, as upon an occasion in which the public was concerned as well as himself, ' ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here ; and ' they sat down.' He then solemnly declares ' unto the elders, and unto all the ' people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I ' have purchased *Ruth* the *Moabitess* to be my ' wife. And all the people that were in the ' gate, and the elders said, We are witnesses;' adding at the same time their united good wishes, that ' the Lord would make the ' woman' a signal blessing to him and his house. [*Ruth* iv. 1, 2, 9—12.] It must be allowed, that in this case there was the greater need of a formal public process, as it might have been contested, whether *Boaz* had the first right to *Ruth*, till his other relative had publicly refused her. But it ought likewise to be allowed, that we have here no inconsiderable confirmation of our view of the marriage-

marriage-covenant, as a public transaction, while we see how evidently it was supposed, and how inseparably it was connected, with other divine appointments. As for the manner in which *Ruth* first obtained the regards of *Boaz*, we must acknowledge with Mr. *Matthew Henry*, “ That it is not easy to
 “ clear it from the imputation of indecency ;
 “ that the goodness of those times was such
 “ as saved it from being ill-done, while the
 “ badness of these times is such, that none
 “ can be justified in doing the like.” And instead of rashly censuring her conduct, we should first duly consider, that, according to the divine law, [*Deut.* xxv. 5—10] she had a legal claim to become the wife of her deceased husband’s nearest surviving relative ; and that both herself, and *Naomi* her mother-in-law, from whom she received all her information, thought *Boaz* to be that nearest relative. Consequently, in putting herself under the protection of *Boaz*, she really did
 what

what was her prescribed duty to do, though she might have performed that duty in a less exceptionable manner. We also should consider, for her farther vindication, as well as to vindicate *Boaz* himself, that when all those circumstances in her conduct, which look most indecent, are carefully examined, there will be a just foundation for concluding, that these two persons, who were in no little probability of being speedily married to each other, and who were actually married the next day, did nevertheless remain the whole preceding night, in a very retired place, and with all the concurring advantages for perpetual secrecy that could have invited them to commit antenuptial fornication; but preserved their virtue, amidst the strongest temptations to the contrary, and for which they were distinguished by divine approbation. The sacred historian leaves us no room to doubt of this, by the manner in which he closes the narrative. ‘ So *Boaz* took *Ruth*,
‘ and

‘ and she was his wife ; and when he went
 ‘ in unto her, the Lord gave her conception,
 ‘ and she bare a son.’ [*Ruth* iv. 13.] Where-
 as, by a very different manner of expression,
 we were before told, that ‘ she lay at *Boaz*’s
 ‘ feet until the morning.’ [*Ruth* iii. 14.] As
 for what is immediately added, ‘ And she
 ‘ rose up before one could know another ;
 ‘ and he said, Let it not be known that a
 ‘ woman came into the floor ;’ instead of
 leading us to imagine, that his desire of se-
 crecy proceeded from a consciousness of guilt ;
 it rather illustrates his wisdom and prudence,
 as equal to his integrity ; at the same time
 that it plainly shews us what an infamous
 thing antenuptial fornication was then es-
 teemed, or even the least circumstance that
 might give occasion to suspect it.

The other marriage referred to, is the sin-
 gular case of *Mary* the Virgin-mother of our
 Lord, and of *Joseph* his supposed father. It
 appears,

appears, that, before the time when the angel *Gabriel* was sent to the blessed Virgin, to inform her of the conception of Christ in her womb, 'she was espoused to *Joseph*.' [*Matt.* i. 18. *Luke* i. 26, 27.] It means, that there was a contract between them, by which they had mutually promised to be joined together in marriage at some future season. This method of espousals before marriage was usual among the *Jews*, by which the persons intending to be married, were so betrothed to each other, and the obligation was esteemed so strict, that if a woman proved false, the divine law required her to be punished as an adulteress. [*Deut.* xxii. 23, 24.] But it is never to be imagined, that this punishment would be inflicted, according to this law, upon the single evidence of the man who thought himself injured; which would be putting the life, as well as the reputation, of any virtuous woman into the hands of any base and perfidious man. This law therefore

fore must necessarily go upon the previous supposition, that such espousals were also first made in the presence of proper witnesses. Now between these espousals and the intended marriage, as the writers of *Jewish Antiquities* inform us, the man had a liberty of being more freely and frequently in the company of his intended wife, than he had before. For virgins among all the eastern nations were much more concealed from public view, than has been usual among us. But though these espousals were made before proper witnesses, and implied in them such an inviolable obligation; yet they were never designed to diminish any of the public solemnities with which the marriage itself was afterwards consummated. Such were the espousals before marriage between *Joseph* and *Mary* the mother of our Lord. It was during this interval of their espousals, and as the Evangelist expressly says, 'Before they came together;' that is, before they cohabited as husband and wife;

wife; ' she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then *Joseph* her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.' [*Matt. i. 18, 19.*] As their espousals were no secret in the neighbourhood, the divine law, just now referred to, might have authorized him, not only to have refused her marriage, but to have required for her a punishment proportionably public. His concern therefore to put her away privily, not only discovers the great perplexity of his thoughts, together with the tenderness and mildness of his temper, and the need there was of a divine interpretation to direct his conduct; but it also clearly shews us, what is of real importance in our present enquiry, that both the espousals before marriage, and the marriage itself, were considered among the *Jews*, and that too in conformity to divine directions, as affairs of a public nature, and which were to be attended with every circumstance

cumstance that could prudently give them a public authenticity. And this conclusion is the less liable to objection, because, as Dr. *Doddridge* observes, “ There was, humanly speaking, a probability, that *Joseph* might have brought some suspicion on his character, or reflection on his family, by admitting *Mary* in these circumstances.”

[*Fam. Expos.* Vol. I. p. 42. note (g).]

Suffer me to add one more testimony from Scripture, and more I need not add. Our blessed Lord, in his conversation with the woman of *Samaria* at *Jacob's* well, having offered her the ‘ water that springs up into everlasting life,’ and thereby given her plain intimations of his being the *Messiah*, the Saviour of the world, in order to lead her to a humbling sense of her own need of salvation by him, said to her, ‘ Go, call thy husband, and come hither.’ The woman, far from apprehending his design, answered him, ‘ I

E

‘ have

‘ have no husband.’ This genuine but undesigned confession gave her heart-searching Teacher the best opportunity for declaring to her, ‘ Thou hast well said, I have no husband ; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou hast, is not thy husband ; in that saidst thou truly.’ [*John* iv. 14—18.] This declaration seems very conclusive in our present enquiry, to convince us, that there is no marriage, where it has not a legal authenticity ; that the commerce between the sexes, whether for a shorter or a longer time, while it is merely supported by mutual agreement in secret, is nothing less than fornication ; and that, whatever plausible appearance such commerce may wear in the sight of men, it is seen without disguise, and explained without equivocation, by Him who shall finally judge all men, ‘ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.’

Having

Having considered how far our idea of the marriage-covenant is conformable to the dictates of reason and scripture, let us now see how these dictates are enforced by our national laws concerning marriage. We may take it for granted, that the form of the solemnization of matrimony, as it stands in the Book of *Common Prayer*, contains so much of the purport and meaning of the several acts of parliament that are in force relating to marriage, as was thought of real importance for popular knowledge and practice. The smallest attention to that form will convince us, that our view of the marriage-covenant is there abundantly illustrated and confirmed. The mutual promise in that covenant is there placed in such a point of light, as makes it intelligible to the meanest capacities. And there the declaration of the mutual promise before proper witnesses, is most effectually provided for. In order fully to authenticate every particular marriage, it

is there wisely appointed, that the banns of marriage be published on three several days, in the place and time of divine service, before the matrimony itself be solemnized. The persons to be married must, for that purpose, come into the body of the church, with their friends and neighbours, then and there to receive personal instruction, from the ministers of religion, concerning the nature and importance of the relation they are entering upon. They are then and there, before all present, to make an explicit declaration of their mutual promise to cohabit for life, and to be continually careful to promote the happiness of each other; and are even to express their declaration word for word after the minister. Their hands are to be joined together by the minister, while he shall utter these solemn words, *Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder.* The whole solemnity is to conclude with serious prayer for their future happiness. Except it

be the use of the ring, there is nothing in these particular appointments, but what is perfectly rational and scriptural. And to have such dictates of reason and scripture established by the authority of parliament, must certainly increase our obligation to a conscientious compliance. Indeed, it affords us a distinct illustration of the high importance of civil government to society, and of the real excellence of civil governors, in taking care that reason and scripture should be the firm and unshaken basis of the laws which they enact. To talk therefore, as your friends, Sir, unwarily did, and as too many are frequently doing, with reference to the present question, that persons may be criminal in the account of our national laws relating to marriage, at the same time that they remain guiltless in the sight of God, is treating the laws of our country with the highest contempt, as if they had nothing to support and countenance them, but the ar-

bitrary invention of tyrants, and the blind submission of slaves. What can be more obvious than this, that when any national law is ultimately to be resolved into the law of nature and revelation, every transgression of such a law will on that account be attended with more aggravated guilt? How happy would it be, if every violator of the *seventh* commandment of the divine law would seriously consider, how exceedingly their transgressions are heightened by being committed against the united dictates of nature, revelation, and our own civil government! But while too many have rendered themselves incapable of such serious consideration by their habitual whoredoms and adulteries, we have better things to hope for from those who have rashly pleaded for antenuptial fornication. Let us therefore intreat such persons to recollect, what abundant evidence there is, both from the light of nature, and revelation, that, whenever marriage is wisely entered

entered upon, it will not be merely from private views, but from a regard to the good of society, and the support and happiness of the world. And as to the manner of commencing that relation, they must allow, that the legislator has an undoubted right to determine the modes and conditions of an engagement, to which the civil advantages of marriage are to be annexed. Then let them consider, that, if nothing be enjoined by the legislator, but what has its just foundation in reason and scripture, there cannot but arise an additional obligation from scripture itself upon every individual member of the community, 'to be subject' to such appointments of the legislator, 'not only for wrath,' or for fear of suffering the penalties inflicted by human laws, 'but also for conscience-sake,' because the magistrate 'is the minister 'of God.' [Rom. xiii. 4, 5.] This reasoning appears to carry such conviction to every serious mind, that *Dissenters* from the *Esta-*

blished Church, the *Quakers* only excepted, never scruple to comply with the form of marriage in the *Common Prayer*, or so much as object to what is there prescribed, excepting to the use of the ring, to which, however unsupported by reason or scripture, they nevertheless conform, as a mere trifling circumstance. Nor indeed have any sort of persons ever discovered their dissatisfaction, even with our penal laws relating to marriage, unless it be those upon whom such penalties were at any time too justly inflicted. And it should be remembered, that antenuptial fornication is so far punishable, by the constitution both of our civil and ecclesiastical laws, that the children begotten before marriage are deemed bastards, and are rendered incapable of inheriting their father's estates and privileges. Hence it is, that persons have actually lost their vote at the election of members of parliament, for no other reason, but because, though their fathers were burgesses, they
them-

themselves were begotten before wedlock. And for the same reason it has also happened, that persons eminently distinguished for honour and virtue, have been very unjustly prosecuted in ecclesiastical courts, through the rashness and malevolence of those, who watched opportunities of hurting them, only because their wives were delivered of children seven months after marriage. — It is observable, that the laws of *Scotland* so far differ from those of *England*, as to legitimate the children that are born, though not begotten, in wedlock. Thus parents are not prevented from making reparation to their guiltless offspring, by conferring upon their children those civil advantages to which nature seems to entitle them. And this tenderness which the *Scottish* law expresses for such children, seems the more eligible, as, it is hoped, the parents may have been made sensible of their former vice and folly, and have been enabled to

to manifest better dispositions of heart, and better conduct in life.

Now, my dear Sir, with whatever satisfaction we are viewing the apparently harmonious dictates of reason, revelation, and national law, with reference to our present enquiry, I can easily imagine what fears are still remaining in your benevolent and discerning mind, lest all the force of argument should there be lost, where we are particularly solicitous to have conviction take place. The most rational deductions, arising from moral fitness or unfitness, and the expedience or inexpedience of any conduct, merely on ethical principles, strike the mind but feebly; and though they may have a sufficient force to confirm the virtue of the unprejudiced and well-disposed, yet they are too generally ineffectual for controuling the preconceived notions and favourite inclinations of the vicious. Alas ! the additional strength of revelation

lation itself is too often tried without success. It is a common excuse which men make for any criminal practice they are unwilling to part with, that though it cannot be defended on universal principles, yet the guilt of it is inconceivably diminished, by considering it as a private and particular case. This prompts them to say, " Why should it be thought
 " any real detriment to mankind, or what
 " considerable mischief can result to society,
 " from one single instance of antenuptial for-
 " nication ?" And thus they love to keep out of sight a consequence, which they cannot but know is unavoidable, that if a single instance can be vindicated, ten thousand may with the same certainty. But under these evident discouragements, Sir, let us comfort ourselves, that there is a law yet remaining, which is easier to come at, than either the law of nature, revelation, or our country ; a law, which is capable of speaking with a louder voice ; and whenever it speaks, it will
 perfectly

perfectly harmonize with each of the laws we have been considering, and will amazingly enforce all their dictates. Undoubtedly you perceive I am now referring to the law and voice of conscience. And had I a favourable opportunity of personal converse with your ingenious friends, or with any other advocates of antenuptial fornication, I would endeavour with freedom and seriousness to appeal to their consciences; nor should I apprehend myself to deviate thereby from the strictest rules of disputation, and least of all from the candour and faithfulness of friendship. I humbly submit it, Sir, to your maturest consideration, whether some such queries as the following might not in that case be very seasonable.

“ Gentlemen, can it be pleaded with a
 “ good conscience, that the leading motive
 “ to such antenuptial commerce is not the
 “ same, the very same, with that in all other
 “ instances

“ instances of fornication ? Is not the un-
 “ bridled violence of passion, or raging flame
 “ of lust, supported and cherished by a stupid
 “ neglect of all future consequences, and
 “ only pushing forward, like an impetuous
 “ torrent, to the unreasonable gratification
 “ of the present moment ?”

“ After such lawless enjoyment, would
 “ any man be able presently to go to a holy
 “ God in an act of secret devotion, without
 “ any conscious sense of having in that par-
 “ ticular instance displeased him ? Are we
 “ not really, what we are secretly ? Is not
 “ converse with men like ourselves, a very
 “ different thing from conversing with God ?
 “ May not fellow-creatures be silenced with
 “ the mere appearance of argument ? Or,
 “ as is too often the case, may they not by
 “ grimace and ridicule be brought to concur
 “ in the approbation of what is vicious ? But
 “ is not converse with God a touchstone to
 “ the

“ the inmost temper of the mind, a powerful
 “ means of discovering what is sin, and of
 “ demonstrating that every sin is, not only
 “ unreasonable and hurtful in itself, but an
 “ high affront to the Divine Majesty, and
 “ rebellion against his holy, just, and good
 “ law ?”

“ Would not any man feel himself in-
 “ wardly uneasy in the thought of having
 “ his antenuptial commerce made known to
 “ the world ? Bad as the world is, hath it
 “ not such remaining prejudices in favour
 “ of a virtuous character and conduct, that
 “ generally the virtuous shall have its ap-
 “ plause, and the vicious be persecuted with
 “ its deserved censures and reproaches ? Are
 “ not the greatest debauchees often awed
 “ into decency by the mere presence of those
 “ whom they know to be wise and good ?
 “ And how can the antenuptial fornicator
 “ possess himself without any conscious dis-
 “ quietude

“ quietude arising from the loss of his ho-
 “ nourable name, in an instance in which he
 “ knows it might have been secured with
 “ ease and certainty ?”

“ Will it not be perpetually grievous to
 “ such a fornicator, to find that his criminal
 “ embraces, when brought to light, do ne-
 “ cessarily diminish the respect of his most
 “ valuable friends and relatives, and which
 “ he would otherwise have enjoyed without
 “ interruption or abatement ? Is it not the
 “ peculiar excellence of persevering integrity,
 “ to be able to see itself slighted, without
 “ any real loss of self-enjoyment, and because
 “ it remains satisfied with its own intrinsic
 “ worth ? But when the wisest and best of
 “ friends shall look shy upon the man, whose
 “ conscience tells him, that he has forfeited
 “ their esteem, can he in such circumstances
 “ shake off every pressure from his spirits,
 “ and

“ and be as serene and undisturbed, as when
 “ his conduct was altogether unblemished ?”

“ And if any thing can be more grievous,
 “ will it not be this, to see his conduct prove
 “ the real but irresistible occasion of im-
 “ bittering the lives of those, whom he was
 “ most solicitous to serve and please ? To
 “ bring sorrow, confusion and infamy into a
 “ family, to wound the heart of a tender
 “ parent, and stain the life of a deluded young
 “ woman, and what is still nearer, and (if
 “ possible) more criminal, even the life and
 “ character of one who is soon to be the
 “ wife of his bosom, with a dishonour that
 “ can never be wiped off, are circumstances
 “ one would think sufficient to check the most
 “ violent passion in a heart which has the
 “ least tincture of pity and good-nature. Would
 “ any one purchase the gratification of a
 “ moment at so dear a rate, and entail a
 “ lasting misery on others, for such transient
 “ satis-

"satisfaction to himself; nay, for a satis-
 "faction that is sure, at some time or other,
 "to be followed with remorse? [Guardian,
 "Vol. II. N^o. 123.] And will not this
 "remorse be enhanced, in proportion as
 "there is reason to fear, lest the anxious
 "concealment, during the months of preg-
 "nancy, may not a little contribute to injure
 "the health, and endanger the life, both of
 "the mother, and the fruit of her womb."

"What if the sudden death of an intend-
 "ed husband should prevent the marriage,
 "after the woman is become pregnant by
 "their antenuptial fornication? Can the cir-
 "cumstances of the surviving mother and
 "child, in that dreadful but not improbable
 "supposition, be ever thought of without
 "horror? Into what complicated distress
 "will she be plunged? How incapable will
 "her child be of ever inheriting any part
 "of its father's property, since no bastard

“ can inherit but by will, and no man can
 “ be supposed in such circumstances to have
 “ made provision by will for such a child?
 “ How will the mother be despised, and not
 “ unjustly evil-spoken of, both at home and
 “ abroad, when in other circumstances she
 “ would have had more than a title to all
 “ seasonable compassion and relief? How will
 “ she be liable to vexatious prosecutions in
 “ the spiritual courts? And how surely will
 “ her past conduct be made an insuperable
 “ objection to her obtaining any future agree-
 “ able settlement? Where then is the mon-
 “ ster that will say, it is but a small crime,
 “ to entail on the woman he loves, and on
 “ her helpless, innocent babe, such various
 “ wretchedness; or even to do that which
 “ has any probable tendency to produce it?
 “ Would it afford any relief to a woman, in
 “ such a miserable situation, to be able to
 “ recollect, that she permitted the forbidden
 “ commerce to take place when it was within
 “ a day

“ a day or two of the intended marriage ?

“ Or can she be supposed to review the hand

“ of God, which broke in upon her by such

“ a sudden death, without concluding that

“ her guilt was the mark of divine venge-

“ ance, and alike the abhorrence of heaven

“ and earth ?”

“ But if the intended marriage is at length

“ accomplished, will it not be painful to

“ observe, and can the father and mother

“ avoid observing it, that a first-born will be

“ very far from occasioning that general joy,

“ which in other circumstances it would

“ certainly have done ?”

“ Would not a man, after marriage, con-

“ tinue to have a much better opinion of his

“ wife, for having absolutely refused to com-

“ ply with his desire, when he solicited her

“ to antenuptial commerce ? Would he not

“ really love her more fervently, and behave

“ to her with more deference and esteem,
 “ for such refusal? On the contrary, does
 “ not a woman’s consenting to this proposal,
 “ before marriage, tend to ruin, at least
 “ greatly to impair, that modesty which is
 “ the grand support and defence of nuptial
 “ happiness? And would not a husband be
 “ apt to conclude, that such a wife was of
 “ a wanton disposition, and therefore sooner
 “ or later be likely to grow jealous of her,
 “ especially in case he should be long ill or
 “ absent? And though there might be no
 “ just cause for his jealousy, might not the
 “ effect with regard to his happiness be really
 “ the same?”

“ Let us suppose, for we have no need
 “ to fear the supposition, because it carries
 “ the evidence of its own absurdity along
 “ with it, that this antenuptial fornication
 “ was not really criminal in the sight of God,
 “ would it not even then be every man’s
 “ duty

“ duty to avoid it, for the sake of order, and
 “ the good of society, and to prevent the
 “ ruin of thousands of young women by
 “ deceitful promises of marriage? Nay, is
 “ it not certain, that if such a practice was
 “ permitted to take place generally, society
 “ would soon be all in confusion, and must
 “ finally disband? Will any father, who
 “ allows himself to plead for antenuptial for-
 “ nication, and who has a daughter mar-
 “ riageable, suffer a young man to continue
 “ his addresses to her, nor take any measure
 “ to restrain his visits, though he is told,
 “ and has good evidence to believe it, that
 “ the young man argues like himself for the
 “ lawfulness of antenuptial fornication?”

“ Let us also suppose it a merely doubtful
 “ case, whether antenuptial fornication be
 “ criminal in the sight of God, and in that
 “ view of it would it not be the duty of
 “ every rational creature to take the safest

“ side of a doubtful question? Are we not
 “ obliged as men, and much more as Chri-
 “ stians, to deny ourselves, where we have
 “ the least reason to doubt that we may be
 “ in the wrong, or may act counter to the
 “ general opinion of wise and good men?
 “ And does not reason, as well as revelation
 “ declare, that ‘ he who doubteth’ of the
 “ lawfulness of any action, ‘ is condemned
 “ if he’ does it, ‘ because whatsoever is not
 “ of faith, is sin?’ [*Rom. xiv. 23.*] “ And
 “ may we not justly defy the greatest liber-
 “ tine, either to prove that the practice in
 “ question is absolutely lawful in the sight
 “ of God, or to free his own mind from
 “ all suspicion of its unlawfulness? Conse-
 “ quently, to continue to plead for such a
 “ practice, what an insolent contempt does
 “ it discover for the general sentiments of
 “ mankind; what a want of self-denial and
 “ superiority to the gratifications of appetite
 “ and passion; and indeed, what a demon-
 “ stration

“stration does it give of a very irreligious
 “turn of mind, and such as is quite incon-
 “sistent with Christian purity?”

“But is there any real foundation for he-
 “sitation and doubt? And ought it not
 “therefore to be especially considered, and
 “will it not be so by every wise and good
 “man, that the Holy Scripture denounces
 “the most awful threatnings, not only against
 “whoremongers and adulterers, but against
 “all wantonness, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
 “together with filthy words, and impure
 “thoughts? Must not every man then, who
 “desires the favour of God, strive to keep
 “at the remotest distance from all such abo-
 “minations, and from every thing that leads
 “to them, or looks like them?”

After having very tenderly, but faithfully,
 suggested such sentiments as these, we might
 reasonably hope, Sir, that conscience would

not fail to perform its important office. However that may be, we should solemnly fix the charge upon ourselves, never to forget such persons in our prayers; either that their mistaken principles may be seasonably corrected; or, if their practice should ever prove as corrupt as their principles, that they may rise again by sincere repentance, that their future life may be the more exemplary in every branch of virtue and piety, and that the guilt of this and every other sin may be done away by the pardoning mercy of God through a blessed Redeemer.

Thus far our thoughts and reasonings have been employed about the peculiar failings of others. Happy for us, my dear friend, if, in the mean time, we have not forgot our own. It must certainly be of the highest importance for us to consider, whether the open faults of others may not be greatly exceeded by the sins and follies which we are secretly cherish-

ing

ing in ourselves. Is there not too much reason for us to reflect, that the irregularities of our thoughts, and the defilements of our mind and spirit, may frequently be such, that one who has committed an open crime, may (all things considered) be less culpable in the sight of God than ourselves? It becomes us, therefore, 'not to be high-minded, but fear; and while we think we stand, to take heed lest we fall.' We should particularly remember, that good principles are not always productive of correspondent practice. The great *apostle*, when writing to a person of such eminent piety as *Timothy*, thought it necessary to urge upon him this grave advice, to 'flee youthful lusts.' Pardon me, dear Sir, if I now freely apply the same advice to yourself. Believe me, it is not because I am defective in love to your person, or that my expectations from your present or future temper and conduct run low.

But

But I appeal, Sir, to your own breast, if there is not something in your present circumstances which suggests to me a more immediate and peculiar occasion for recommending such apostolical advice to your serious attention. As, on the contrary, I cannot but think that the manner in which your friends conversed with you, for the same reason to which I now refer, was peculiarly unseasonable and dangerous.

A time of courtship seldom proves an interval of life the most remarkable, either for prudence or piety. It has on many accounts been too often a fatal season. There are but few, perhaps, that can altogether acquit themselves of some blame relating to their temper and conduct in such addresses to a fellow-mortal. I verily believe, Sir, it is your earnest desire and care to get over the enchanting ground with the same purity of heart and life with which you first entered upon

upon it. I know you have ever abhorred the very thought of antenuptial fornication. And I am verily persuaded that your just abhorrence has been daily increasing, in all your interviews with that amiable object of your tenderest affection, with whom you hope to share the unpolluted joys of marriage.

While I am thus confident of your truly virtuous intentions, I cannot but congratulate your distinguishing happiness, in having been so effectually preserved amidst the numerous snares of youth, through the concurrence of divine grace with the wisdom and piety of your early instructors. Happy indeed, to be kept at the remotest distance from these enormities, by which so many of your age and affluence are doing all they can to destroy their most valuable interests both for time and eternity !

How

How unspeakably happy, Sir, for youth in general, if they had your sensibility of danger, and saw in the same convincing light, that such an inestimable jewel as conscious virtue, needs and deserves their continual watch ! Would to God they were brought seriously to consider, that, while animal instincts and inclinations are the same in human bodies as in other living creatures, our reasonable and religious capacities enable and oblige us to observe such laws and rules, as cannot be given to the brutal and unreasonable part of the creation ! Whatever perversion their wanton and ludicrous minds are disposed to give to such sentiments as these, it is nevertheless of infinite importance for youth to remember, that the true notion of chastity is to keep within those rules of propagation, which are prescribed by the will and law of our Maker. And if youth acted in conformity to that unerring will and law, *love* and *wisdom* would be constant associates : *lovers* would be

be a mutual guard on each other's virtue: *courtship* would prove as friendly to reason and religion, as it is peculiarly intoxicating to sense; and *marriages*, preceded by rational and religious courtship, would have all the best blessings and distinguishing honours of virtue and piety entailed upon them. Amours, so conducted, would always maintain their due subordination to divine love, and never suffer any regards to a fellow-creature to rival those which are supremely due to the adorable Creator. Such lovers, in every interview with each other, would converse, as never to banish, either the sobriety of reason, or the warmth of piety. Never would they desire secret chambers for the scenes of courtship, but rather chuse places of less retirement, and consequently of less danger; while every word and action would express the integrity of their heart, and the chastity of their imagination. Often would their thoughts recollect, and as often would they

they inculcate the divine sentiment on each other, 'Thou, God, seest us.' And often would they try what help the union of their hearts could afford them in the united acts of self-dedication to him, whose unparalleled love engaged him to die for them.

Such wishes for the happiness of multitudes may seem as chimerical, as they are likely to be ineffectual. But whatever a gay and giddy world may imagine, it must be said, not only concerning the ends of marriage, but also of all the previous circumstances which are justly to be included in courtship, that, viewed in the genuine light of reason and scripture, they are perfectly consistent, both with the dignity of the man, and with the purity of the Christian. For there is no interval of life, without excepting even courtship itself, in which it is not our indispensable duty, as well as our highest interest, to be still 'putting on the new man, which after

' God

' God is created in righteousness, and true
 ' holiness ;' and to be ' cleansing ourselves
 ' from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,
 ' perfecting holiness in the fear of God ;'
 ' and to be adorning the doctrine of God,
 ' our Saviour in all things.' While, under
 the influence of these noblest principles, you
 are making it your highest ambition to pass
 through every scene of life, wonder not, Sir,
 to have thoughtless multitudes despise you.
 Believe it, what they now despise, will soon
 be the object of their approbation and praise.
 A little experience will oblige them to justify
 you, and condemn themselves. They will
 see you increase in honour and happiness,
 while they decrease. Your heart will un-
 doubtedly pity them, and pour out fervent
 prayers for them. May your virtues and
 graces excite their imitation ! And may you
 long fill up every desirable station and relation
 in life, to your own, and others abundant
 joy ! In that joy I am hoping for no incon-
 siderable

terable share, over and above what has
been delightfully possessed already on your
account by, Sir,

Your affectionate friend,

and humble servant.

F I N I S



